of our position. The Government of Sri Lanka have informed us that the request is receiving their due consideration and that the extradition, if agreed to, would have to await completion of trial and legal processes in Sri Lanka.

India's Intervention in Diffusing West Asia Crisis

3889. DR. ABRAR AHMED: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat has sought India's intervention in diffusing the on-going West Asia crisis; and

(b) if so, Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY - OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Mr. Hani Hasan, Special Envoy of President Yasir Arafat, visited New Delhi from 1-3 April, 2002 and delivered a letter from President Arafat to the Prime Minister. In his letter President Arafat conveyed his sincere gratitude for India's assistance and support to the Palestinian people. Mr. Hani Hasan requested that India should use its good offices to help restore normalcy in the region.

Government have expressed their deep concern at the recent incidents of violence in West Bank, Gaza and other parts of Palestinian Authority, Israel and Jerusalem. Government of India have been in touch with countries in the region on these development.

Optimisation of Expenses Incurred by Indian Missions

3890. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any effort has been made recently to optimise expenses being incurred by the missions abroad in the interest of fiscal discipline;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof; and

(c) if not, whether Government would consider doing so and by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH):(a) Yes, Sir. the Ministry of External Affairs is conscious of the need to optimise expenses incurred by our Missions abroad. Against the Budget Estimate of Rs.756 crores, during the year 2001-2002, the revised expenditure is Rs.730 crores.

(b) and (c) In pursuance of the need to optimise expenses, the Ministry of External Affairs has abolished 24 posts in Missions abroad, imposed a 10% cut in the non-plan expenditure, reduced Daily Allowance (D.A.) rates by 25% for local tours by officers abroad and imposed a complete ban on purchase of new vehicles.

Release of Rebels by Myanmar

3891. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news report captioned "Myanmar snubs India fresh rebels" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated the 18th March, 2002;

(b) if so, fact thereof and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to persuade the Myanmar Government to apprehend the freed rebels to contain transborder terrorism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Myanmarese security forces in an operation in November 2001 in the Tamu area, reportedly apprehended a large number of Indian Insurgent Groups. It was learnt that a huge cache of arms, fake currency notes etc. were seized. India had requested through diplomatic channels that an Indian team be allowed to interrogate the insurgents who had been captured. GOI has been following up through the existing institutional mechanisms and through diplomatic channels.